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Opening extract from

Lady Lollipop

Written by

Dick King-Smith

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"She's never been too keen on dogs," said the King.

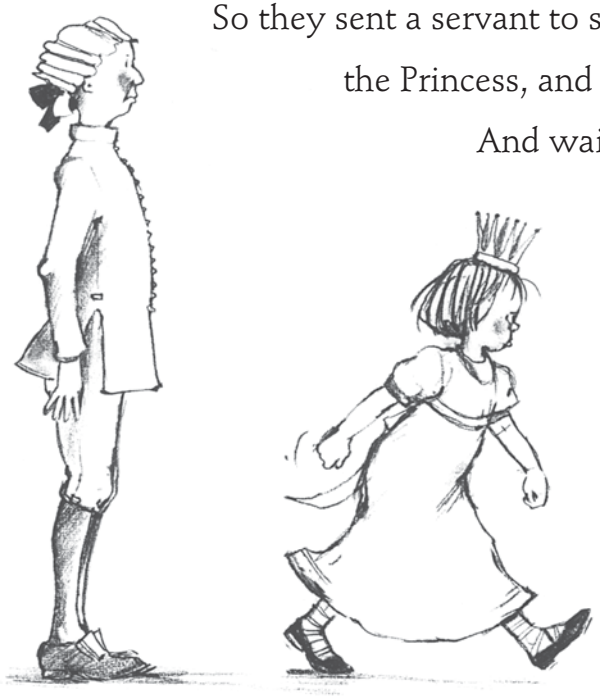
"Well, a kitten then?"

"Or cats," said the King.

"Well then, let's ask her what she would like," said the Queen.

"But then it won't be a surprise. Still, I expect you're right. Let's have her in and see what she says."

So they sent a servant to summon the Princess, and waited. And waited.



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"She can have absolutely anything she likes, of course," said the King.

"Well, I don't know…" began the Queen.

"Absolutely anything," said the King.

Shortly the servant returned with a message from Princess Penelope that she would come when she was ready and not before.

King Theophilus laughed.

"She's got a will of her own, has our Penelope," he said.

"You can say that again," said the Queen.

Just then the door burst open and in came the little Princess with a face like thunder.

"What d'you want?" she said. "You interrupted a game I was playing."

"Now, now," said the Queen, and "Steady on, old girl," said the King. "We want to ask you something. What would you like for a present on your eighth birthday? A pony?"

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“Don’t like horses,”
said the Princess.

“A puppy then?”
asked the Queen.
“Don’t like dogs.”

“Or a kitten?”
“Or cats.”

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"Well, you tell us, darling," said King Theophilus. "What *would* you like?"

"A pig," said the Princess.

"What!"

"I want a pig for a pet."

"A pig, Penelope?" cried the Queen. "But a pig is a dirty animal."

"Is not!" said the Princess.

"A pig," said the King, "is an ugly beast."

"Is not!!" shouted the Princess.

"A pig," said the King and Queen with one voice, "is a stupid creature."

"Is not!!!" yelled the Princess at the top of her voice.

"I wanna pig,
I wanna pig,
I wanna pig!"

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So loudly did she yell that everyone in the Royal Palace heard her, from the Lord High Chamberlain to the smallest scullery boy, and everyone thought, Was there ever such a spoiled child?

Queen Ethelwynne looked at her husband.

" 'She can have absolutely anything.' That's what you said, Theo," she remarked.

King Theophilus sighed.

"All right then, my sweet," he said. "Daddy will buy you a pig."

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"A bit of a strange name"

Chapter Two

The first thing that the King did was to issue a Royal Proclamation, which stated that every pig-keeper in the kingdom was commanded to bring one pig to the Palace at a certain time on the day of Princess Penelope's eighth birthday.

"That way, Eth," said the King to the Queen, "our Penelope will have the widest possible choice."

So, when the time came, dozens and dozens of pig-keepers gathered in the Great Park, in the centre of which the Palace stood.

Each man had brought one pig, in a cart or on a rope or, if small enough, in his arms, and what a selection there was. There were

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big pigs and middle-sized pigs and little pigs, there were pigs with upright ears or droopy ears, with long snouts or pushed-in faces, and as for colour, why, there were pigs of every imaginable hue. Many were whitish of course, but some were black, some reddish, some stripy, some spotted, all lined up on the green grass of the Great Park, ready for the Princess's inspection.

Most of the pig-keepers knew that the Princess was a very spoiled child, and many of them expected that she would not be satisfied with just one pig. The King and the Queen rather expected this too, and they kept their

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fingers crossed as they walked along the lines behind the birthday girl.

But, far from choosing lots, the Princess passed from pig to pig and all she said was "No."

"Do you like this one, Penelope darling?" the King would say.

"No."

"Or this one perhaps," the Queen would say.

"No!"

But after a bit they gave up asking, because "No!" became "NO!!"

"I'll tell you when I find the one I want," said the little Princess. "Just stop nagging me."

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Each pig-keeper was of course very disappointed as the inspection party passed him by, for to have had his pig chosen to live at Court would have been the greatest honour.

But it was beginning to look as though the Princess simply couldn't find anything she liked. Whatever the size or shape or colour, she merely scowled and shook her head and marched on.

Until there was only one animal left, at the very end of the very last of the lines of pigs of all sorts.

This last pig, the King and Queen could see, was quite different from all the other fat, well-groomed animals. They say that pig-keepers tend to look rather like their charges, and most of the owners were, if not well-groomed, on the fat side. But the last pig was a long skinny creature, held on the end of a piece of string by a long skinny boy.

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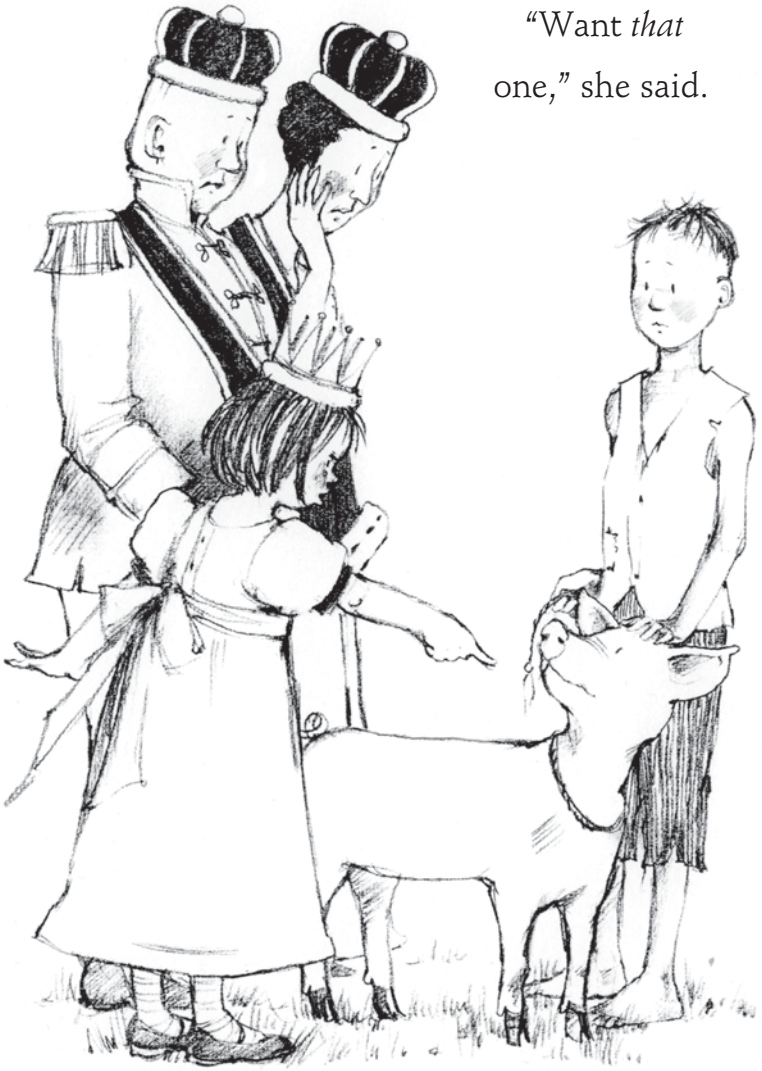
It was a dirty white in colour and the boy looked none too clean.

Princess Penelope pointed at this last pig.

"Want *that* one," she said.



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